

BUDGET WORKSHOP
JULY 21, 2003

The City of Leesburg Commission held a Budget Workshop Monday, July 21, 2003, in the Commission Chambers at City Hall. Mayor Connelly called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Lewis Puckett
Commissioner Ben Perry
Commissioner Bob Lovell
Mayor David Connelly

Commissioner David Knowles was not present. Others present were City Manager (CM) Ron Stock, Deputy City Manager (DCM) Robert Johnson, Acting City Clerk (ACC) Betty Richardson, Deputy City Clerk (DCC) Diane Gibson Smith, and Deputy Finance Director (DFD) Diane Reichard.

Budget Review

CM Stock reviewed the proposed budget for fiscal year 2003-2004 against the present year's budget for personal services, operating expenses, capital outlay, debt service, grants and aids, and other uses. Overall, the proposed budget is lower than the current budget.

In personal services, reasons for the increase include: workers compensation insurance increase, retirement fund investments, and the addition of new personnel including eight positions within the General Fund. One position being requested is a special projects coordinator position in the Recreation Department. This position will also serve as curator for the Mote Morris House. A curator is important in qualifying to obtain museum grants.

Operating expense increases are mainly due to the cost of gas and electricity. There is a proposed reduction in the capital outlay which will be discussed further at the August 11, 2003 Commission meeting. CM Stock distributed a map showing where the proposed capital projects are located. He noted capital projects will occur throughout the City and not in just one area.

CM Stock stated the proposed debt service does not include the Canal Street project and Magnolia Street extension as there are concerns with these two projects. There are several options available to fund the projects such as grants, debt, or through the FMPA loan. The proposed debt service does include the repayment of funds to the Electric Fund from the Communications Fund.

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP OF JULY 21, 2003

CM Stock distributed a handout showing the budget for the past 3 years. He noted the residents in Leesburg pay the least in combined utilities and taxes in Lake County. Commissioner Lovell added none of the other cities offer the same services as those offered by Leesburg.

Questions

Mayor Connelly opened the floor to questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Puckett questioned the new position for gas sales. Electric and Gas Director (EGD) Lloyd Shank stated the position is not for sales; it is a technical position. Gas is a highly competitive market. Tracking of additional services and preventive maintenance will be included in this position.

Commissioner Lovell left the meeting at 5:56 p.m. and returned at 5:59 p.m.

Commissioner Puckett questioned how a .9 employee was determined. CM Stock stated the number of employees is based on hours worked.

Commissioner Puckett questioned the cost of the Canal Street project. CM Stock stated the rebuild of the street is being designed to go from US Hwy 441 to Dixie Avenue as a divided roadway to maintain the trees. The pavement will be wide-lane to accommodate semi-trucks turning. DCM Johnson added there is not enough right-of-way to 4-lane most of Canal Street. Keith Riddle of Riddle Newman Engineering is working on the design and will bring it in within 30 days.

Commissioner Puckett noted he is impressed with the decrease in health insurance. He stated grants and aids for the Chamber of Commerce and the Partnership should be the same as last year.

CM Stock stated grants and aids can be discussed at the July 28th Commission meeting. Any changes to the budget need to be made by August 25, 2003. First reading of the budget ordinance will occur at a special meeting on September 11, 2003.

Commissioner Lovell stated it has been a pleasure to work with CM Stock. Many good things are happening in Leesburg.

Commissioner Perry stated he has questions on three capital projects for the August 11th Commission meeting. He questioned how the needs assessment is coming. Library Director (LD) Barbara Morse stated she expects a presentation on the needs assessment will be scheduled for the end of August. CM Stock stated the Library is applying for a state grant and should receive notification of acceptance by April 2004. This will help in the building of the new library.

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP OF JULY 21, 2003

Commissioner Perry questioned the funds slated for fiber service to Clermont. EGD Shank stated staff has been contacted by four or five customers looking for fiber optic services to the Clermont area.

Commissioner Perry stated the underground service program was put off from last year. Infrastructure needs to play a role in determining the need. The priority needs to be in the area needed most. Sixth street was discussed as being an aesthetic problem and thus not a priority, yet it is being done. EGD Shank stated Sixth Street is being under grounded now because of a need for additional fiber optic in the area, so it made sense to go ahead and underground all the services at this time. The City Attorney still has the draft ordinances regarding undergrounding and will bring them to the Commission.

Commissioner Perry stated grants and aids need to be reviewed. He would like to drop the Partnership back to the amount received last year, increase the Chamber of Commerce a little, give the Boys and Girls Club a little increase, and fund the Center for Arts. Operating expenses have gone up too much in the budget. Training and team building does not work because of the Sunshine Law. The City Commission expenses need to be trimmed. CM Stock stated perhaps the groups should be invited to an upcoming meeting to present why they need an increase. The Partnership has reached success. The original thought was to have director and then some part-time clerical help.

Commissioner Lovell stated when talking about grants and aids, you are talking about peanuts and not talking about much in comparison to the entire budget. The Partnership has responsibilities over the whole City and is doing many good things. The amount of money given to them is small and nit-picking. Need to encourage it all we can and not discourage it. The Commission needs to agree to disagree.

Mayor Connelly stated the budget summation is innovative and time saving. The budget document is a fine document. He is concerned about Shady Oaks but understands the problem is being resolved. Mayor Connelly is also concerned about the flood proneness of Carver Heights area and wondered if anything could be done. DCM Johnson stated the Carver Heights area has been completed, now complaints are being received in regards to the Pine Street and Childs Street area.

CM Stock stated the Whispering Pines area is the next area to be redone. The stormwater budget is being increased this year.

Mayor Connelly asked if anyone in the audience had any questions.

Sanna Henderson, a concerned citizen, reiterated what Commissioner Lovell said about the grants and aids being a small part of the budget. She noted the budget should be approved as presented.

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP OF JULY 21, 2003

Commissioner Lovell motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Puckett seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Mayor

Attest: _____
Acting City Clerk

Recorder: Diane L. Gibson Smith

Budget Workshop 030721